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LETTER

From a Gentleman in North Britain to the
Right Honourable, the Earl of Seafield,
concerning the Improvement of the
Salmon Fishing of North Britain.

My Lord,

I presumed when I was last Year at London, to send Your Lordship a Short Memoir, concerning the *Salmon Fishing of North Britain*; But I suppose Your other more worthy Affairs did not at that time allow You to Consider of it, and the Various, both Publick and Private Affairs, with which You are Busied, have perhaps Diverted Your Thoughts from this one in particular. Yet, since I humbly conceive, so very Important, and Your Lordships so Zealously Strenuous in promoting the Publick Good, that I take once more the Liberty, to put You in mind of this Useful but Mismanaged Branch of our Northern Trade; and the rather, because of late, a Person, Eminent for his Quality and Parts in this Place, has wrote a most Judicious Letter, concerning the Fishery of Herring, Codd, Ling, and all White Fish, that abound on the Coasts and Islands of North Britain; and he has so well demonstrated the Easie Means of Improving the Fishery, to the Vast Increase of our Wealth and Power, that it were in vain to offer any thing new upon the Subject. But he has spoke nothing at all to the *Salmon Fishing*, which yet deserves to be more particularly taken Notice of; because we daily Reap the Advantages of it, and may, with no more Labour, and very little more Expence, draw Twenty times more Interest from this Our Native and Peculiar Stock, than at present I speak within Bounds, as shall instantly be made Evident.

We have already very good Laws Enacted against such, as by undue means, Destroy the Salmon, 'tis pity they should be so little observed: For I have known a Poor Fellow not worth a Groat, kill with a Spear in one Nights time an Hundred Black Fish or Kipper, who were all for the most part, full of Rans Unspawned; Now had these been preserved, as by Law and Reason they ought, one of the above mentioned Number would in a short time have Multiplied, beyond what seems Credible, although the third part had but come to per-
fection. They might have made more than 20 Barrels of Salmon, a Thousand of the Rascality kind of People in Different parts of North Britain, do all at the same time as much Mischief as I Mentioned: And even a great many Gentlemen, Inhabitants by the Rivers, are guilty of the same Crimes, which are proof both of the Non observance of the Laws that Relate to this matter, and of the Prodigious Treasure that is thus Miserably Delapidated.

And this is not all, For when those Fishes that escape free of these Enemies, and sometime after having Spawned and come to Life in their Swiming down the Rivers to the Sea, tho' no bigger than one's Finger, most part such as the same People Catches these, Likeways the latter end of April and beginning of May, tho' of little or no Use with small Fishing Rods, Notts, and Greels in Mill-Damms: Millions are thus Destroyed before they come to the Sea. Whereas were those Swarms of pretty Creatures let go, and had Free Passage, they would Return again from the Sea to the Rivers, in less than two Months, to wit, June and July there-
after, so bigg, that about Sixty or Seventy of them, after Pining and Curing, would fill a Salmon Barrel, which contains Ten Scots Gallons, which is near Forty English Gallons. How Cheap and Plenty a Harvest this would prove to the Reapers, I leave it to any Equitable Per-
son to judge.

Yet notwithstanding all these Butcheries and Iniquities, that Exhaust so much of our Wealth, we have no mean Profit, even as things are now managed by our Salmon Fishing: For I have known upwards of two or three Thousand Barrels Shipt off from North Britain in one Years time, Nay, I know and I'm sure, Sir James Calder of Moirtown alone, Sold to one English Merchant, a Thousand Barrels in one Years Fishing. Now I suppose but 2000 Barrels Sold Yearly to Foreign Countries, if so I hope no Body will doubt after what I have said, but it could send off, at least twenty times as many, that is 40000 Barrels, if the Laws were put in Execution. I mean if Care were taken to preserve the Black or Kipper Fish, before they Spawn the Rans, and the tender Brood from Murdering Hands thereafter.

I shall

I shall again suppose, that each Barrel of Salmon Exported from Britain into France, Italy, and Spain, or even Holland, and Sold but at Six pound Sterl: For this is the Lowest Price; Which is true, as Certainly it is, 40000 Barrels of Salmon, so Exported, would bring back to Britain 240000 Lib: at least Yearly, which would be more than the Equivalent, if Imported in Goods or Merchandises, and this is a Profit, which none of our beyond Sea Neighbours can Share in but Britain alone: For I never knew in my Life, a Salmon Catch'd in the Sea, a Mile from Land, for this is our Property, and only ours, and therefore the more to be Improved, as far as the Nature of the Fishing will allow. The means are easily, let the Kipper Fish, and Tender Brood be preserved, which may be Effected as I hinted at before, with little or no Charges, by putting the former Laws in Execution, and making some few Regulations; Such as I shall mention before I take leave of you. I could heartily wish, that a part of the whole Fishery, and intirely the Salmon Fishing, I mean of North Britain, were in Her Majesty's Hands. And the Reason of this, few or none of the Hei-tors of the Salmon Fishing are Merchants themselves, nor will they Expose their Fishing to the hazard that Attend Merchandising by Sea.

Hence it is, That they commonly Set or Wadset their Shares in the Salmon Fishing to others, whereas if the Queen were Mistress of the whole, Her Commissioners of the Customs would take Care of it, which would be Encouragement to all Merchants in Britain, and Profit Her Majesty, and make the Hei-tors no Losers; and a Riding Officer or two Appointed to Secure the Brood of each Considerable River, would effectually prevent the Destruction and Ha-vock that's daily made of Salmon: However, as Matters stand, I humbly conceive, that Her Majesty and the Estates of Parliament may be prevailed with if applied to, and in their Wif-doms think fit, to Order that such Necessary Officers may be appointed to attend the Rivers at such Times as is necessary, which is five or six Months of the Year. viz. From October, to the middle of May, and then to Inform against the Guilty, and see the Laws put in Execution, a small Allowance to be given by the Hei-tors, or Her Majesty out of each Barrel of Salmon to the Officers, would Quicken his Diligence, and keep him to his Duty, the Richest Sort of People that are found to Transgress, ought to be Severly Fined, and the Poorer Sort that can pay no Fines, to be Employed in Her Majesties Service, Abroad in time of War, or sent to the Plantations in time of Peace, and some of them be Exemplary punished to the Terror of others, would be no Hardship from whence so publick a Good must needs ensue.

Thus, my Lord, I have Presumed to offer my Thoughts to you, Concerning this Branch of our Trade, which is Regulate aright, will certainly improve far beyond what I have Expressed, or indeed can be Imagined at first View, how far you will concern your self, or endeavour to inform the British Parliament in it; I leave to your better Judgment to Determine. One thing I am sure of, you will Omit nothing in your power, that Tends to the Advantage of the United Kingdom, nor will the Parliament over look what may be Beneficial to this part of it in particular, especially if applied to it by such a Member as your Lordship. As for the Method of Curing, its pretty well understood by severals, and would be too long here to insist, I shall take another time for that. I shall only observe to your Lordship, that its absolutely necessary they be cured with Foreign Salt; For altho Salmon, especially the Grilses or young Fish may look as well to the eye, when Foreign Salt is mixed with Inland Salt, yet they Taste not so well, or can be half so long preserved, as with Foreign Salt alone. I need say no more of this Subject, and I fear I have Encroached too much upon your Lordships Time, by putting you to the Perusal of so long a Letter, and I hope your Lordship, will do me the Justice to believe, that I am, and shall be all my Life

My Lord

Your Lordships most obedient and most humble Servant,

J. H. N, N, B.



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